

## THE FIRST BLOW---THE RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

The Greatest Allied Victory Since  
Trench Warfare Began—Why the  
Germans Stripped the Eastern  
Line for the Verdun Attack  
—The Russian Drive  
On a Wide Front.

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On the purely military side too little is yet known of the great Russian offensive to estimate what its ultimate effect will be. On June 13, when this article is written, we know that the Russians have captured some 115,000 prisoners, an enormous amount of arms, guns and munitions, have reoccupied Lutsk, Dubno and Busacs and have entered, or are about to enter, Czernowitz.

Measured by miles the Russians have advanced in places above thirty-five miles and claim to have reached the Zlota Lipa at one point. The taking of Dubno and Lutsk marks the return to Russia of the famous Volhynian triangle, of which Rowno never was lost. From this triangle the Russians in August, 1914, launched their great drive, which in the first days of August ended in the collapse of Austria's armies and the fall of Lemberg. Not until the Russians reached the Carpathians and the Dunajec were they halted, and not until the German offensive at the Dunajec, a little more than a year ago, did the tide turn.

#### The Allies' Greatest Victory.

It can now be said that the Russians have won the greatest victory on the Allied side since the trench warfare began. It is the most considerable success on either side since the battle of the Dunajec, and it is a final demonstration that trench lines can be broken and the deadlock at least temporarily interrupted under certain circumstances. We have first to examine these circumstances and then to consider the possible consequences of the actual operation.

It is fairly clear that the Russian attack was delivered at the weakest point in the Austro-German line after there had been a large and patently unwise stripping of this line for reasons that are clear. Away back at the beginning of the war we saw that Austrian armies were unable to stand up against Russian, when they were not supported and stiffened by German contingents. We saw the Russians consistently successful from the frontier to the edge of the Hungarian Plain and over a period of nearly nine months.

#### Troops for Verdun.

When the Germans had reorganized the Austrian armies and put German corps in each army group the Russian tide first halted and then ebbed. But when the Germans decided to attack Verdun in February, it is now clear that they drew from the whole eastern front large contingents. They drew heavily upon the Austrian armies south of the Pripiet marshes. The troops thus drawn were not put in at Verdun immediately. They were concentrated in front of the British, the German belief being that an attack upon the French would provoke the British into a counter-offensive.

At the time these troops were drawn out of the eastern lines the Russians could not take the field because the conditions of the roads and the weather made operations impossible. For at least three months the Germans could count upon rest and safety on the east. But within that time it was always necessary that they should bring their Verdun operation to a successful close. In a small way this was to be compared with the opening phase of the war, when the Germans turned their main armies against France and left only minor forces to deal with the Russians.

#### Thinning the Line.

So far they have failed before Verdun as they failed at the Marne. But meantime as the Verdun operation has continued to absorb men they have been compelled to draw from in front of the British those troops that had been originally drawn from the east. It is clear now that there is no such concentration in front of the British as there was in February. Many thousands of troops have been used up along the Meuse and, after more than

three months Verdun is still holding out successfully.

A little later, having temporarily failed at Verdun, the Germans persuaded their Austrian allies to draw still more troops out of the east and turn them against the Italians. This explains the original success of the Austrian drive against the Italians between the Brenta and the Adige.

But the situation had now arrived for which all the Allies have been waiting for

lines, not everywhere, but at a number of points. The collapse of the Dunajec army alone, last year, resulted in the retreat of all the Russian armies, but in the present operation there was a partial or complete collapse on the part of three or four armies, with the result that the Austrian line was transformed, to use the figure of a map, from a solid to a dotted line, the dots representing portions of the line that still held, the breaks between the gaps through which Russian armies penetrated.

#### Austrian Line Broken.

Thus north and south of Dubno the line was broken, Lutsk fell and the Austrians were compelled to draw out of Dubno to escape being surrounded. The same thing happened at other points, the Russian wave rolling forward not evenly, but as the tide sweeps up along a broken shore, following indentations and halting before projections.

This process is still going forward. We do not know whether the Austrians have succeeded in drawing what is left of their armies out of the wreck and reestablishing a line. We do know that at several points, notably north of Lutsk and southwest of

west and stood along the Dunajec. So completely was this army destroyed that the whole flank and rear of all the Russian armies in Galicia were uncovered, and it was impossible for the Russians to make a successful reconcentration of their armies which could hold until they reached their present lines, several months later. Nevertheless, the Russian armies were able to make a temporary stand at the San, less than fifty miles behind the Dunajec, and to draw the wrecks of their defeated corps and their artillery out of Galicia.

It is too soon to say whether the Austrians will be able to make a reconcentration between the frontier and Lemberg, although it is clear that German attacks north of the Pripiet marshes and even a little south from the direction of Kovel are already being made, with the hope of relieving the pressure upon the Galician armies and recalling Russian troops to the threatened points. By the time this article is printed it should be possible to tell whether the Russian advance has spent its force or not. If it is still going on at the present rate, Lemberg will probably fall and Galicia be reconquered as

This, of course, is only on the political side. On the military side, by retiring the Germans would shorten their lines very materially, and standing behind the Niemen and Vistula and the San, and along the Carpathians south of Przemyśl, which could come back into the bulletins, they would have an easier line to defend and one which would offer grave difficulties to the invader. There would be no immediate, perhaps no eventual, peril for the Germans of such an envelopment as threatened the Russians for so many weeks last summer.

#### The Political Peril.

But for political reasons the Germans must desire to avoid this recoil. They are in the position of Napoleon in his last campaign in Germany; they are condemned to hold long and dangerous lines because of the political consequences of retreat and the surrender of conquered territory. Napoleon had to fear, what happened, the entrance of Austria; Germany has to fear a complete change in the Balkan situation, and the probable enlistment of Rumania, if she has to confess defeat by any considerable relinquishment of conquered territory.

Lemberg Faces Deadly Peril—The  
German Map of "Victorious  
Peace" May Be Wholly  
Changed—The Field of  
War as a Unit—The  
Decisive Phase.

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der conditions similar to those which made the Russian drive successful.

On the other hand, if the Austrians draw back troops from the Italian front, as is reported to have been done, then the Italians are bound to attack, not in the Trentino, but along the Isonzo, where they have been preparing for more than a year. Even a slight advance at this point would take them to the rear of Trieste and threaten the whole waterfront of Austria-Hungary.

Finally, if the Central Powers draw any part of their slender forces out of the

at some time not later than this summer the Central Powers would have to shorten their lines or suffer disaster. It is too soon to say that the Galician fighting demonstrates that this was an accurate forecast or constitutes a great disaster. Certainly it is a tremendous defeat, but we shall not have to wait long to see whether the Allied prophets have at last been accurate.

Accepting the Allied forecast for the moment, what should now happen is a withdrawal by the Germans either from France or from all the Russian territory which they now hold, save only Russian Poland. We may soon see the evacuation of France and even of Belgium or the retreat behind the Niemen and the Vistula.

#### Evacuation May Follow.

But the first will be accepted as a tremendous moral defeat all over the world and will encourage France and Britain to go forward; the second will be a plain invitation to Rumania and Greece to come in on the winning side and a discouragement to Bulgaria and Turk, which may conceivably tempt one or both to change sides, for so far both have suffered out of all proportion to anything they expected, and their hope of permanent profit is growing very dim.

On the other hand, we may see that the Germans will be able to bring reserves into Galicia, restore the deadlock, standing behind the Bug and the Zlota Lipa and at the same time beat off any British attack in the West, an Italian offensive in the South or Allied operations in the Balkans. Yet even now it is not too soon to say that we are witnessing what is intended by the Allies to be the first move in the "Big Push," their supreme effort to win the war.

#### The Decisive Period.

It is my own belief—and in this I found ample agreement in Europe—that the present summer will see the decisive phase of the present war. Unless one side or the other wins a substantial victory, unless the Germans are turned out of France and Belgium, or such a deliverance is well begun, I believe the winter will see the beginning of negotiations for peace on the basis of *status quo ante*. I do not believe that if the deadlock continues any belligerent will continue to desire war, provided no sacrifice of territory is asked of any nation. Nor do I believe that any such demand will be made if there is no change.

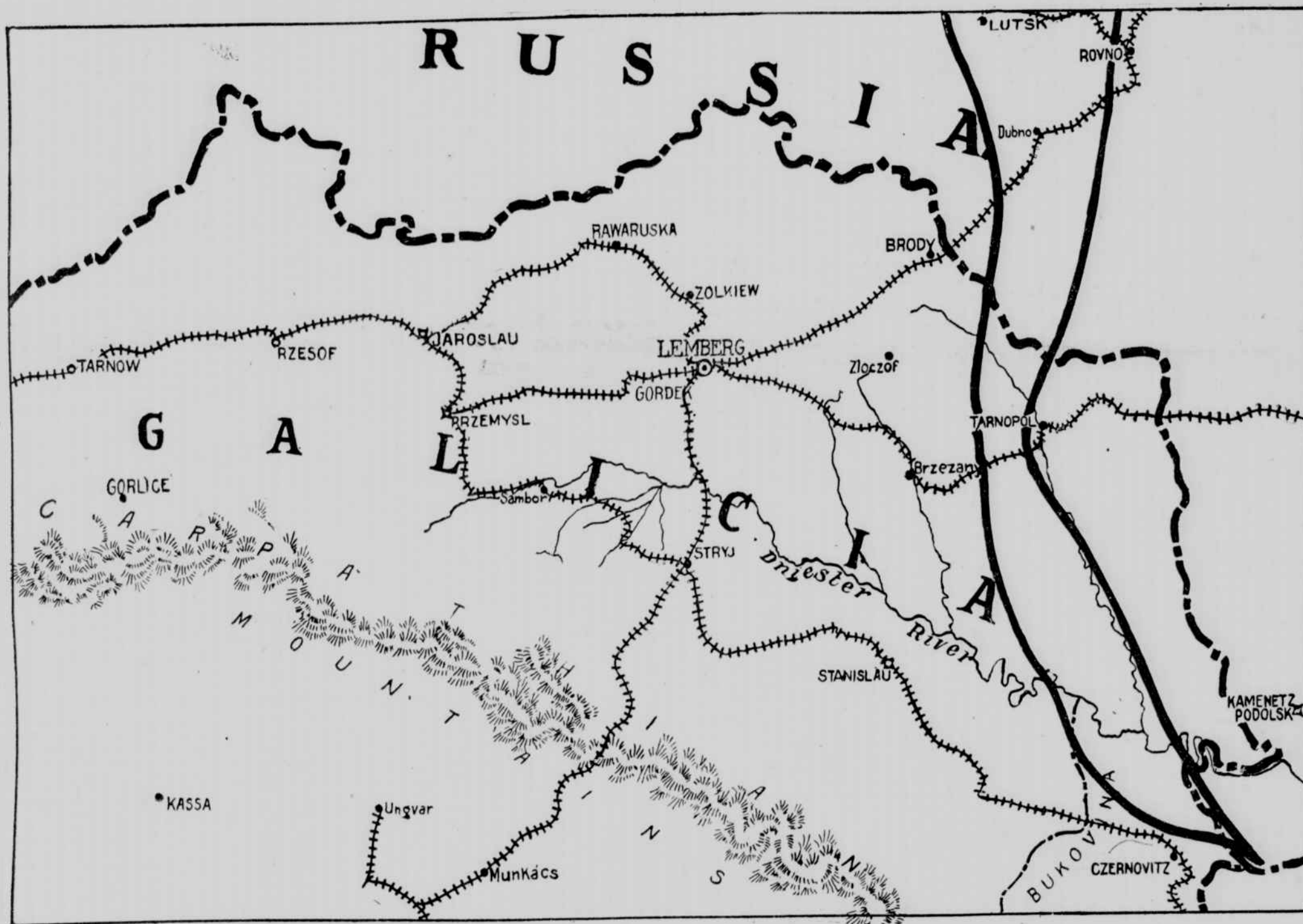
But the eagerness of Germany to make peace before the summer campaign began, the refusal of the Allies and the astonishing success of the Russians in the first operation must combine to give new hope to the friends of the Allies and afford at least reasonable ground for believing, as the French and British do, that they have Allies to be the first move in the "Big War" and that after Verdun the outcome of the war is assured.

#### The Meaning of Verdun.

We begin to see the meaning of Verdun more clearly now. France once more "took on" the "operative corner" of the fight. She accepted and fulfilled the mission of holding the final drive of the Germans to win a moral victory on the battlefield. By holding Verdun for nearly four months under terrific attack the French have succeeded in preventing the moral victory for Germany; their work is now about done. It must be for the British and the Russians to bear the cost in lives and do the main work of the summer campaign. France has fought and won another Marne, even if the ruins of the old city of Verdun should ultimately fall to the Germans.

Verdun may easily prove to be another Genoa and Pétain may have rendered to the Allies exactly the service that Massena rendered to Napoleon when he held the Italian town until the victory of Marengo had been prepared. Genoa finally fell, but Marengo settled the war.

#### THE GALICIAN FRONT.



The two black lines inclose the territory regained by the Russians.

weeks. One portion of the lines of the Central Powers was so thinly held that an attack could be made with every promise of success. The Austrians had passed the margin of safety, relying, it is clear, upon the marvellous system of intrenchments which they had constructed along their front from the Pripiet marshes to the Rumanian boundary.

#### Brussiloff Strikes.

What the Russians did remains somewhat obscure. Apparently discarding the now familiar attack upon a narrow front after long artillery preparation, they attacked along a very wide front, much more than a hundred miles, as compared with less than twenty in the Champagne attack and rather less than ten in the Verdun operation. Their general directions of attack were north from Rowno along the Kiev-Kovel railroad, with the fortress of Lutsk as a first objective; west along the Rowno-Lemberg railroad, with Dubno as an objective; northwest along the Odessa-Lemberg railroad from Tarnopol toward Lemberg, and, finally, south across the Pruth, with Czernowitz, in Bukovina, as an objective.

We know that the first phase resulted in a surprising collapse of the Austrian

Dubno, German counter attacks have begun, but they do not seem to have resulted in any permanent check to the main Russian wave.

To study what may happen it is necessary to turn back to two parallels. At the outset of the war two Russian armies, one commanded by Brussiloff, who now commands all the Russian armies in this group, entered Galicia, one coming along the Rowno-Lemberg railroad from the fortresses of the Volhynian triangle, the other coming northwest along the Odessa-Lemberg line.

#### Lemberg Next.

On this occasion the Austrian armies endeavored to stand a few miles west of the point that the Russians have now reached and before the city of Lemberg. They were defeated and routed; in the weeks that followed not less than 300,000 prisoners were captured, and the Russian hold on the major portion of Galicia was not shaken for many months. If the Russian advance continues for another week, the two armies will probably be standing on the old battle ground of September, 1914, and Lemberg will be in deadly peril.

In the Dunajec campaign Mackensen pierced the Russian army which faced

far as the line of the San and the Carpathians.

If the Russian advance in Galicia reaches and passes Lemberg, then the effect upon the German lines to the north, from the Pripiet marshes to the Gulf of Riga, will be unmistakable. Just as the Russian armies along the Carpathians were compelled to go back when the Dunajec army collapsed; just as the Warsaw army had to retire when the Galician army had been driven back upon Lublin, the German armies will have to retire from the Dvina to the Niemen, and conceivably to the Vistula, to avoid being taken in the rear by the Russian armies, which are advancing in the south.

#### The German Map Destroyed.

This retreat would mean the surrender of a clear half of all the territory now held by the Germans in the east; it would mean that a balance between Russian territory held by the Germans and Austrian territory held by the Russians would be almost struck and the German claim to make a "victorious peace" on the basis of the map would be destroyed. In a word, the whole situation in the east would be changed, and changed in a wholly unexpected fashion.

Before turning to examine the political consequences of continued Russian success, I desire to mention very briefly the situation that seems to exist now. Bear in mind that henceforth the whole field of the war in Europe must be viewed as a unit. In the winter of 1915 Germany, having failed to break the Anglo-French lines and win the war, could go east and build up her campaign against Russia because she knew that the French and British would not be ready for many months to attack her. This explains her great drive into Russia, which had reached its maximum of success before the Allied drives in Champagne and Artois could be begun.

But now if the Germans draw any considerable number of troops from the western to the eastern front it is certain that the British will attack from the Somme to the sea. They are now ready to make this attack. They have not less than 1,250,000 troops where they had little more than a fifth of this number a year ago; they have big guns and ammunition, and they have had a very long time to prepare. Nothing is more certain than that the withdrawal of any number of German divisions along the western front will be followed by a terrific British offensive, exactly like the present Russian drive, and delivered un-

Balkans it is certain that the Allies in Salonica will attack the Bulgarians, and it is exceedingly likely that the Bulgarians will very quickly tire of fighting the British, French and Serbs, with a fair prospect of having the Greeks on their hands as well; for the first sign of collapse on the part of the Central Powers is bound to bring the Greeks in and King Constantine cannot prevail upon his people to remain neutral once the fortune of war begins to run markedly in favor of the Allies.

#### The "Big Push."

It is clear, then, that this Russian offensive may well be the first step in the "Big Push" that has been expected so long. The Austro-Germans are heavily outnumbered on all fronts now. They have weakened themselves on one front to deliver two blows on two other fronts. Both blows have been parried and neither has resulted in any military achievement of moment. While some ground was being won in France and along the Italian boundary at a high casualty cost, a disaster has come on the eastern front, and there has been a partial and possibly a permanent collapse on the part of several armies.

The Allies have always maintained that